

11/1/99

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
COUNTY OF CHAMPAIGN) SS

BEFORE THE CORONER OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

INQUEST ON THE BODY OF)
IWA B. YOUNG, DECEASED.)

TRANSCRIPT OF THE EVIDENCE

Reported by
MARJORIE D. EARLEY
COURT REPORTING SERVICE
1404 West University Avenue
Urbana, Illinois



I N D E X

Witnesses

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John Aiken Bondville, Illinois	State of Illinois employee	19 - 22

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE EVIDENCE adduced and the proceedings had at an inquest taken for the People of the State of Illinois at the Heath Memorial Home, 201 North Elm Street, Champaign, in the County of Champaign in the State of Illinois, on Monday, the 4th day of November, A. D. 1957 beginning at the hour of 7:30 P.M. before the

Honorable DONALT T. WIKOFF,
Coroner in and for the said County of Champaign and State of Illinois, upon view of the body of IVA B. YOUNG, deceased, upon the 1st day of November, A. D. 1957, then and there lying dead, upon the oaths of six good and lawful men of the said county.



CORONER: Mrs. Young, I think if you will come up, please,
and take the chair over there.

LUCILLE YOUNG

called as a witness herein by the Coroner was by him first
duly sworn, by him examined, and testified as follows, to
wit:

Q. Will you state your name?

A. Mrs. Lucille Young.

Q. And your address?

A. Bondville, Illinois.

Q. And your occupation?

A. Housewife.

Q. Now, Mrs. Young, you I think are a -- were a daughter-
in-law of Mrs. Iva Young who was burned in this
fire and that this Jury has seen here at the
funeral home earlier?

A. That's right.

Q. Mrs. Iva Young also lived in Bondville?

A. Yes.

Q. For some reason or another, you had occasion to --
you do not live together there, do you?

A. No.

Q. You had reason to go down to her home on Friday,
November 1, at approximately three o'clock in
the afternoon?

A. Yes.



- Q. And when you got there, or close by, you realized perhaps there was some difficulty, a disturbance of some sort there. Would you tell the Jury how you first became aware something might be wrong?
- A. When I pulled up in front of the house, there was smoke coming from around the windows and the edge of the roof of the house.
- Q. Did you see anyone there about the grounds or on the lawn?
- A. No. I started around the house. I thought maybe there was a bonfire in back of the house. I couldn't see any.
- Q. Did you see any person around the house, Mrs. Young?
- A. No, nobody.
- Q. Then I think in some manner you alerted Mr. Aiken and Mr. Woods to give you some help there?
- A. Yes, I did.
- Q. How did you reach them, Mrs. Young?
- A. I ran down a couple houses to my niece's house to use the phone and I ran in there and I said the house was on fire and I knew Grandma was in there and the little boy ran across the street to the store, I think, and I ran back to the house.
- Q. Were you there, then, when these two gentlemen at-



tempted to get in some way, eventually did get in and took Mrs. Young from the house?

A. Yes, I was.

Q. Just a couple other questions, Mrs. Young. Has there been any work done on the house lately that you know of in the way of repair or alterations or anything?

A. No.

Q. Is it your habit to visit with Mrs. Iva Young occasionally?

A. Yes.

Q. About how often? Would you say any regular ...

A. A couple times a week I go down there.

Q. When were you there last; do you recall?

A. Last Sunday. My mother lives right across the road and we had a birthday dinner on her and I went over and got Grandma Young and took her across the street for dinner.

Q. It was the Sunday before the Friday, November 1st?

A. Yes.

Q. And this was the last time you had seen her?

A. No, I had seen her Tuesday morning. She had gone after the mail and I saw her.

Q. Did you visit with her, pass the time of day?

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A. Yes.

Q. Did she say anything about any irregularity about the house or anything? Any appliance in the house?

A. No, she was just worried about losing her glasses. She was worried and looking for them and couldn't find them.

Q. How was her vision without her glasses, Mrs. Young?

A. Evidently not too bad because she hadn't had the glasses very long.

Q. Do you think she could find her way about the house without her glasses?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Did she say anything to you that day in regard to her own personal health, about her health?

A. No, she didn't.

Q. Mrs. Young was not in the best of health, I believe?

A. No. She had a stroke several years ago and sort of drug one foot and one arm was affected some.

Q. This day you saw her when she was all right, when she was after the mail, did she seem about the same to you as when you had last seen her?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And, just to confirm one thing for the Jury, which they already have been told, but I would like for you



to confirm this is correct. This house is heated by fuel oil using a floor-type furnace?

A. That's right.

Q. There is electricity in the house?

A. That's right.

Q. How would you describe the house? Is it about a four and a half room house, for the Jury?

A. That's right.

Q. It is a one-floor-type home?

A. That's right.

Q. The house is on a north-south street and faces the east or sits on the west side of the north-south street?

A. That's right.

Q. The main room that you come into first is the living room or sitting room, I think?

A. She always used the door going into the kitchen. She didn't use the door going into the living room too much, but there was a door there.

Q. Into the living room?

A. Yes.

Q. This bedroom, second bedroom would be, would you say, more to the back?

A. To the back.



Q. Or the west part of the house?

A. That's right.

Q. Mrs. Young, first I met you at the hospital and then took you to Bondville and visited with you some the afternoon of the fire. I have not seen you since, but I have talked to you on the telephone?

A. That's right.

Q. Do you know of anything new that has come up in regard to the fire since I last visited with you?

A. No.

CORONER: Does the Jury have anything that you would like to ask Mrs. Young? I think that is all, Mrs. Young, if you will take your chair.

(The witness was excused.)

CORONER: Mr. Woods, please, if you will come up?

RAYMOND WOODS

called as a witness herein by the Coroner was by him first duly sworn, by him examined, and testified as follows, to wit:

Q. State your name.

A. Raymond Woods.

Q. Your address?

A. Bondville, Illinois.

Q. Your occupation?

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A. I am a grocer.

Q. Now, Mr. Woods, on the afternoon of November 1, 1957 you were alerted by -- either by a personal visit or phone call or some manner that there might be a fire down near the Young home?

A. That's right.

Q. And were you able to go down there immediately when you received this warning?

A. Yes, I just came in from driving the school bus and I had just come around the store and they told me the house was on fire and I looked and I could see it and I ran down.

Q. Could you tell the Jury approximately how far it is from where you were when you received this word down to the house, Mr. Woods?

A. Probably a city block.

Q. A city block? But you could see from where you were that there was smoke down there?

A. There was smoke coming from the eaves of the roof. You could see that.

Q. You went down there immediately, I think, Mr. Woods?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you pick it up and tell the Jury just what took place, Mr. Woods, when you arrived there?



A. We went around to the west side of the house first.

The door was open there, and we tried to get in to find where Mrs. Young might be and we couldn't find her because when we tried to enter the room the smoke was so thick it would drive you back.

Q. You were trying to go into the rear?

A. The back kitchen door.

Q. You say "we." Who helped -- who else was with you?

A. Well, my son was there and Mr. Aiken, and I don't know whether Lee Edward Dennison was there right at that time or not but he came shortly afterwards. We couldn't get in there so we started around the house trying to see and we broke a window pane. We couldn't see anything. We went around to the front door and John Aiken kicked the front door open and we couldn't see anything for the thick smoke and I lay down on the front porch and looked on the floor line and I could see Mrs. Young on it.

Q. You are trying to tell the Jury, Mr. Woods, that there was a small gap between the floor and the smoke?

A. I would say a four-inch space where you could see, under the smoke, and I saw Mrs. Young and I went in and got ahold of her and pulled her out and



we got a blanket and covered her up and carried her from the porch.

Q. She eventually was taken to the hospital?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Then, in the meantime, I think the Fire Department, the truck, at least, from Savoy and some men came from Savoy?

A. Not until after the ambulance had picked Mrs. Young up.

Q. Mrs. Young had been taken from the house before?

A. Yes. In the meantime we tried to get a fire extinguisher and garden hose to keep what fire down we could.

Q. Mr. Woods, are you in agreement with Mrs. Young's testimony up to now as to generally the floor plan of this home and about the number of rooms and that sort of thing?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you tell the Jury where it is your judgement most of this fire seemed to be?

A. Well, it seems to me like most of the fire was on the southwest bedroom. I think she might have used it for a bedroom and -- her ironing board was sitting there and the iron was on the ironing board.



Q. Was there any actual evidence, Mr. Woods, of any direct burning in any of the other rooms, that you noticed?

A. Yes, there was a chair, over-stuffed chair in the front room that was, I think the cushion was burning. We got that out, and there was a pillow that had been placed or thrown on the floor right near the floor furnace.

Q. That is also in this living room or main front room?

A. That's right.

Q. And that is a number of feet, now, from this room where the fire seemed to be?

A. Yes, it is. Oh, the furnace is probably fifteen feet from where -- from this other room.

Q. Now, Mr. Woods, to heat this home, there is, as has been explained, a floor-type furnace powered by fuel oil?

A. It is a Coleman floor furnace.

Q. The reservoir or supply tank is outside of the house on the south side?

A. Yes.

Q. And this tank, of course, had been removed to a safe distance and had been detached from the main line?

A. That's right.



Q. Would you tell the Jury, did you do that yourself or ...

A. I just helped.

Q. Would you tell the Jury whether this tank was or was not damaged in any way prior to it being moved?

A. No, it wasn't, it was in good shape. The ...

Q. And I think -- go ahead.

A. The tank was half full of oil.

Q. You were still there, Mr. Woods, when I came down and checked that floor-type furnace?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you, when I was there and when I looked, did you see any evidence that this furnace might have puffed out or blown back?

A. No. I think while you were there I raised the grate off the floor furnace and we took a flashlight and looked and it was in good shape.

Q. There was no evidence, I don't think, Mr. Woods, of any kind of blow-by or back-fire?

A. I would say not.

Q. You would say not to that?

A. Yes.

Q. Then the question of the ironing board came up and has been the subject of some conversation. I be-



lieve when you got into that room actually the ironing board was upright on the floor?

A. That's right.

Q. As it was when I got there, it was outside the window at the west or rear of the house?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you tell the Jury whether or not the iron was sitting on the ironing board?

A. When we got in the first time the iron was sitting on the ironing board.

Q. Then, Mr. Woods, on examination of the ironing board was their impairment from the iron, such as it might make had it been sitting on there, turned on, and gotten too hot and actually ignited it?

A. No, the ironing board didn't show any sign of any fire at all that I could see.

Q. Do you have any opinion as to -- let me ask you this, Mr. Woods, in this one back bedroom that you have described, and correctly so, as the southwest room, was there any particular area now which seemed to have had more fire than any of the other parts?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you tell the Jury where that was, please?

A. It was near the plug receptacle on the west wall and



it showed evidence of flame there.

Q. The hotter fire seemed to be along that west wall?

A. Yes.

Q. And it would be near the north wall?

A. Yes, more close to the north wall. I would say it was on the lower part there, to the north of the window.

Q. Do you have, from what you saw there at the time, or later, Mr. Woods, do you have any judgement or opinion as to what might have started this fire?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you feel this fire was a fire started of its own accord or do you think it was a fire set intentionally or purposely by someone else?

A. Personally, I feel like that she might have been ironing and the iron cord caught fire. This has happened to most everyone, if we had a bad iron cord at some time or another, and I think this iron cord might have caught fire and being this place was close to this receptacle at the window, it might have caught the curtain on fire and in her effort to extinguish the curtain, she caught herself on fire and also scattered the flame to the feather bed, which was afire, and caused most



of the smoke, and took the fire into the living room.

Q. Now, Mr. Woods, on this sort of assumption or opinion, could you tell the Jury what you have to base that on, please?

A. Well, due to the fact that the ironing board and iron were sitting there and the fire was started at the receptacle, plug-in receptacle, and the only -- there wasn't any fire in the front room, or the living room, at all other than what could have been carried there.

Q. You think the fire was carried in by Mrs. Young herself?

A. That's right. That is the only way I know how it could have gotten there because it had to be scattered that away, I think, in her fright and trying to get rid of her burning clothes, she might have thrown a garment off on the chair and she might have picked up the pillow to try to put out the flame.

Q. When you were trying to get in the house, before you got any door or window open, when you looked into the house or around on the west side, could you see any flame at that time any place?



A. No, there was just smoke.

Q. Did you ever see flame after you got in the house, after you got some air in there?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that more in this same room again, at the southwest?

A. I worked mostly on the east side of the house. There was some other fellows came around with hose and worked on the west side and the flame I had anything to do with was this over-stuffed chair or davenport and this pillow.

Q. Now, Mr. Woods, also in regard to some wiring down there; did you observe some wiring toward the back of the house that was in good shape or not good shape?

A. I didn't notice any in the house, but the lead-in wire from the pole to the house was in bad shape, I would say.

Q. Do you have any way of knowing the approximate time this was you first received this alarm or this notice that something was wrong there?

A. Twenty minutes to four.

Q. Twenty until four?

A. That's right.

CORONER: Does the Jury have anything?



QUESTIONS BY THE JURY

Q. Was both wires leading into the house bad?

A. There was no insulation; just patches of it.

Q. Could you think that could have caused the fire?

A. No. If it caused the fire I believe it would have been on the outside.

Q. It would have burnt the wire in two on the outside?

A. It would have been on the outside instead of on the receptacle.

Q. Was there any indication that the iron cord had been on fire?

A. I never did find the iron cord.

CORONER: I might tell you about that cord. I looked for that cord and I wasn't able to find it. Now, there had been a lot of folks down there who certainly thought they were doing the right thing. There was a lot of things being taken from the house by the time Mrs. Young and I got down, things like the television set and radio and there had been disturbance of various things in the house, so the placement as they were there about four-thirty could certainly not correspond with their original positions at the time of the fire. The neighbors were doing a good job of trying to



do everything they could.

FURTHER QUESTIONS BY THE CORONER

Q. Am I correct on that, Mr. Woods?

A. But I think they didn't start carrying anything out until they had the fire pretty well under control and they were taking it out mostly to -- because the house would be open.

CORONER: That's right. It was a matter of protection. I didn't mean to criticize the neighbors. They were certainly doing what they thought was the right thing and what was the right thing, but it made it harder to see the true picture as it was after the fire.

JUROR: The iron cord never was found?

CORONER: I couldn't find it. I found the iron.

Q. I believe the iron was still in the house, Mr. Woods?

A. Yes.

Q. And I found the ironing board. Someone had probably put it out through the back window because, if I am correct, there is no back door directly to the outside?

A. No.

CORONER: I have never seen the cord and did not find it down there. Thank you.



(The witness was excused.)

CORONER: Mr. Aiken, would you come up, sir?

JOHN AIKEN

called as a witness herein by the Coroner was by him first duly sworn, by him examined, and testified as follows, to wit:

Q. Will you tell the Jury your name?

A. John Aiken.

Q. And your address?

A. Bondville.

Q. And your occupation?

A. I work for the State.

Q. For the State of Illinois, Mr. Aiken?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, you, also, with Mr. Woods, went down to the scene of the Young home?

A. Yes.

Q. And helped get into the house and get Mrs. Young out, Mr. Aiken?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have heard both Mrs. Young and Mr. Woods testify here. Do you have anything you might add to that or any correction to what they have said?

A. I was talking to Bill Young Sunday and he said there was a drop cord had -- about two foot of the



wire was burned.

Q. I beg your pardon?

A. There was a wire had about two foot of the wire burned. He said he took it down in the basement.

Q. Now, Mr. Aiken, you were in the back of this house, the room described by Mr. Woods as on the south-west corner?

A. Yes.

Q. Where most of the fire seemed to be?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you say there was enough fire in there at some time to burn the iron cord?

A. Yes.

Q. Assuming it was not burned prior to the house fire?

A. I mean actually you couldn't tell. When we broke the window and let the air in, it started to go faster.

Q. The point I was trying to make, Mr. Aiken, was this: Do you think the fire was ever hot enough to have burned the iron cord had it not ignited itself in some manner?

A. It could have been a bad cord.

Q. That's right. I will agree with that. It could have been defective, but providing that was a good



cord and was in the path of this fire, from what you saw was there enough burning that this cord could have gotten that way too?

A. Yes.

Q. Just the same as if we throw this piece of paper on the floor and light a fire around it and it will burn?

A. Yes.

Q. There was enough burning there, Mr. Aiken, it could have? The floor and walls and windows were actually burning, were they not?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you have any judgement, exclusive of what you heard from others, as to how this fire might have started, Mr. Aiken?

A. The only thing I could say was the iron. Her ironing board was in there when we got there. I never seen no iron. I asked Bill if he found the iron. He said there was one. The cord was burnt off. That was Sunday I went down there.

Q. As a matter of fact, you do not know for sure that Mrs. Young was actually ironing on this day, Friday, November 1st?

A. No, sir. No, sir.



CORONER: Does the Jury have anything they would like to ask
Mr. Aiken? I think that is all.

(The witness was excused.)

(The Jury retired and later returned with the ver-
dict as shown on the next following page.)

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MARJORIE D. EARLEY
COURT REPORTING SERVICE
1404 WEST UNIVERSITY AVENUE
URBANA, ILLINOIS
EMPIRE 7-1881 EMPIRE 7-7930

JURY'S VERDICT

We the Jury find that the deceased died of suffocation and burns from a fire in her home, the cause of which is unknown.

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MARJORIE D. EARLEY
COURT REPORTING SERVICE
1404 WEST UNIVERSITY AVENUE
URBANA, ILLINOIS
EMPIRE 7-1881 EMPIRE 7-7930

STATE OF ILLINOIS, } ss.
Champaign County,

An inquisition was taken for the people of the State of Illinois,
Heath Funeral Home

at Champaign in the

in said County of Champaign, on the 4th day of November, A. D. 1957

before me, DON WIKOFF, Coroner in and for said County, upon view of the body of

Iva B. Young

then and there lying dead, upon the oaths of six good and lawful men of the said County, who, being duly sworn to inquire on the part of the People of the State of Illinois into all circumstances attending the death of said

Iva B. Young

and by whom the same was produced, and in what manner and when and where the said

Iva B. Young

came to her death, to say upon

their oaths, as aforesaid, that the said Iva B. Young

now lying dead at Roselawn Cemetery in said Champaign

County of Champaign, State of Illinois, came to her death on the 1st day of

November

, A. D. 1957

We the jury find that the deceased
died of Suffocation and Burns, from
a fire in her home, the cause of
which is Unknown

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said jury of this inquest hereunto set their hands the day and year aforesaid.

William L. Karr, Foreman.
Ralph W. Benson
John P. McChillan

Clayton L. Rogers
Arthur F. May
Lyb R. Sund

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
) SS
COUNTY OF CHAMPAIGN)

The undersigned, HELEN A. JOHNSON, hereby certifies that she is now and has been for several years last past a shorthand reporter; that at the request of the Coroner of the said County of Champaign and State of Illinois she was present at the inquest upon the body of the said deceased, IVA B. YOUNG, as hereinbefore set forth; that she made shorthand minutes of all of the testimony of the witnesses produced at said inquest; thereafter she transcribed all of said shorthand minutes of all of the testimony adduced as aforesaid; that the foregoing transcript is a true and correct copy of the original minutes taken at said inquest and is a true and correct statement of all of the testimony of each of the several witnesses who testified at said inquest.

Done at the City of Champaign in the said County of Champaign and State of Illinois, this 13th day of November, A. D. 1957.

Helen A. Johnson
Helen A. Johnson

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